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Minima temporalia:
Tempo spazio esperienza
 By Giacomo Marramao
 Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1990

Giacomo Marramao, professor of Philosophy of Politics at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, is one of the young Italian philosophers who are trying to keep on the task of thinking "after" and "beyond" Heidegger. In so doing, they are confronted with the most demanding words of the Western tradition, the same problems Heidegger investigated all his life: being, time, experience, feeling, representation, and image. Is it possible to re-consider these words in a way that is not just a repetition of what Heidegger has already done?

It is a risky task, which forces the philosopher to draw lines and to create divisions in a vast territory, leaving plenty of space for criticism. So Marramao is forced to sketch a very short "history of time" at the beginning of his book. In Marramao's account, Plato's and Aristotle's definition of time, although based on representation and number, did not clearly divide between "internal" and "external" time, between *aion* and *chronos*, or, in Latin, *aevum* and *tempus*. This "classical" balance cracked with Augustine. Internal time (*distensio animi*) was separated from the "time of the world." Inner time became ecstatic; external time, on the contrary, was imagined as a line. Augustine's distinction became rule in philosophy, all the way up to Husserl. And, after Husserl and Einstein, many tried to include the "psychological arrow" of time in the scientific vision of the universe—Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers among them. The latter have discovered, or re-discovered, that nature is asymmetrical to time. While the laws of physics seem to operate in

a timeless environment where the time-variable does not alterate any equation, entropy, decay, and irreversibility of time dominate the world of the living. Prigogine and Stengers tried to connect these environments to the possibility of a new alliance between "hard" sciences and human sciences. However, Marramao points out, Prigogine and Stengers still seem to view the asymmetry of time as something anomalous, *versus* the symmetry. They are still looking for the "sufficient reason" of asymmetry, and so they are repeating the well-known metaphysical gesture of looking for the *fundamentum inconcussum*.

From this point on, Marramao turns to Leibniz and Heidegger for a new look at the issue of the principle of sufficient reason, which starts with the "most important" of all questions: Why something instead of nothing? But the question, too, is based on the assumption that Nothing comes before Being, that Nothing is more "originary" than Being. On his part, Heidegger has given more importance to the event of Leibniz's question than to the ontological problem that the question poses. In Marramao's opinion, Heidegger failed to grasp the importance of the issue, applying a reductionist view to Leibniz and Descartes in order to build his "onto-historical" periodization of modernity. The real problem is that, after Descartes and Leibniz, the "classical" balance between subject and reality was lost, so that reality increasingly was constructed and shaped by the subject. On this regard, the role of *perspective* became essential, both in Renaissance painting and in the development of thought. The transcendental, Kantian subject entered Western thought with the Renaissance perspective. From then on, perspective (linked to space) and expectation (linked to time), began to be superim-

posed on each other.

But time "in itself," so Marramao argues, is never to be found. Heidegger's identity of time and Being is not satisfactory. As we know from Augustine to Husserl, time is philosophy's hell. No one has ever been able to describe time without using metaphors borrowed from the realm of space. So, if time has always been representation of time, what is representation?

Heidegger made us aware that perspective, transformation of the world into image, Descartes' emphasis on method, and Nietzsche's Will to Power are all in a line, all steps along the history of subject. In the long run, nihilism and constructivism coincide. But, Marramao insists, Heidegger underestimated the *pathos* at the bottom of Descartes' *cogito*. After the Copernican revolution and its destruction of the faith in the senses, *cogito* remained the only pillar on which the world was built. This is what makes nihilism apparently unsurpassable. The development of subjectivity gave then birth, as Foucault pointed out, to the project of history, to the "birth of man" as subject and object of the representation—that is, included in its own representation of the world. But, this triumph of the representation turned out to be the beginning of its end. In Marramao's opinion, Foucault showed how the transcendental subject "exploded" from representation to endless drift (*deriva*), his periodization of Modernity opposes validly Heidegger's. It is still an hermeneutic circle, but, at the same time, the *vertigo* of infinite self-reference.

The problem is that perspective engulfs experience. In order to have more time, everything is temporalized. Historical conscience and museification of the past proceed on parallel tracks. As Benjamin stressed, the outcome of modernity is the impoverish-

ment of real experience. Is it possible to fill in the empty space between experience and perspective, present time and expectation, existence and project?

According to Marramao, Benjamin and Heidegger do not give us any non-metaphysical answer to the question. Neither do some recent developments of Italian philosophy, from the hope in an epiphanic healing from nihilism in Emanuele Severino, to the dissolution of the subject advocated by Gianni Vattimo.

Marramao's proposal is to move aside of the problem (*spostamento laterale*). We need another visualization. What generates the assumption that time has a direction? In order to answer, it takes an anti-anthropomorphic view, as provided by the most recent scientific discoveries. But here, instead of going deeper into the current scientific debate, Marramao turns to Baudelaire. In *Les fleurs du mal*, Baudelaire deprives time of any "time" metaphor, using only "space" metaphors instead. In Baudelaire, experience is, so to speak, *spatialized*. Like in Plato's *Thymaeus*, Baudelaire's time is *aion*. There is no "inside": inside is out, and the original cosmological experience is reduced to anthropology no more.

Marramao's points are worthy of attention, and, at their best, challenging. What causes perplexity is the quick pace of the book and its enormously ambitious purpose squeezed into 154 pages. The transitions between Leibniz's question, the author's criticism of Heidegger, the Renaissance perspective, and Descartes' method are too fast. While reproaching Heidegger for being easy in historical periodization, Marramao does his best to out-Heidegger Heidegger. Maybe Heidegger is not aware of the *pathos* underlying Descartes' *cogito*, but this does not

change Heidegger's point. In *Was ist das—die Philosophie?*, Heidegger stresses that since Descartes the Greek *pathos* (the "sense of wonder" before the *Kosmos*) has been replaced by method and the quest for certainty. This is the experience of modernity. Besides, "spatializing" time, as Baudelaire did, is no solution to the philosophical dead end of time's issue. It is Marramao himself who points out that time has *always* been "spatially" represented. Furthermore, Baudelaire's "spatialization" of time looks more like the fulfillment of the project of modernity than the restoration of a "classical" balance that is lost and it is not possible to revive. Yet, Baudelaire understands the symbolic, *aionic* power of metaphors more than any other modern poet, but his aim is to clarify his vision in a way that is not opposed to Descartes' project. Baudelaire "spatializes" time to put it *into perspective*, in the most clear and visible *representation*. It is hard to see how Baudelaire can be included in Marramao's *spostamento laterale*. Why didn't Marramao proceed to investigate the relationship between time and the current bio-physical sciences? Prigogine's metaphysics is not the only one which needs to be "deconstructed."

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Institutiones Oratoriae

By Giambattista Vico

Critical text, notes, and introductory essay by Giuliano Crifò.

Naples: Istituto Suor Orsola Benincasa, 1989

The difficult circumstances of Giambattista Vico's life are well-documented. The son of a bookseller of very modest means, he managed to earn a degree in law, despite many difficulties. After several years ("a stranger in his own country") at Vatolla nel Cilento as a tutor to the sons of the rich Marquis Domenico Rocca, Vico decided in 1699, at the age of 31, to compete for the chair of rhetoric at the University of Naples. Although he had originally intended to teach rhetoric only temporarily, upon winning the chair he resigned himself to going no further, disappointed and embittered in his hopes to win a chair of law. Rhetoric thus became for the Neapolitan philosopher the study of a lifetime.

It is to his teaching of that "most difficult art of saying" that we owe the *Institutiones Oratoriae*, his collected university lectures, which he clearly made his students study. An abbreviated Italian version was published in 1844 and republished the following year in a Latin edition based on the original text put forth by Vico in 1711. The *Institutiones* have never been of particular interest to the historiography of Vico's philosophy, considered as they are to be of little importance in the general structure of his thought and even today dismissed as a "merely academic task," a dry, sterile work of compilation, according to the view expressed by Italian Neo-Idealism, and particularly by Fausto Nicolini. Furthermore, the many studies by Nicolini alone (who with Croce also edited the critical edition of Vico's